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Opera for the Young to celebrate 50th Anniversary in 2020 with first-ever endowment campaign

Madison, WI - Opera for the Young (OFTY) is celebrating 50 years of introducing elementary students to opera with a capital campaign to fund a million-dollar endowment. Founded in 1970 by six musicians with a passion for opera and a vision to take professional performance into schools, OFTY selects classic operas and adapts them for children, and since 2018, even includes one original opera in its current rotation. OFTY's professional cast of four singers and one pianist performs Spring and Fall tours for about 200 schools each season. The current production of OFTY's adaptation of "The Pirates of Penzance" will reach about 75,000 students right in their own schools. Starting in Fall 2020, OFTY's classic adaptation of "Hansel and Gretel" will begin the 2020/21 tour.

Most notably, children are primary participants in every OFTY performance. In-depth teaching materials not only lead teachers through preparing a chorus of children to perform onstage for the show, but also provide discussion materials and activities for each grade level to be completed in the classroom or independently. Since 2016, Spanish language materials are provided as well, allowing Spanish-speaking students and their families to connect deeply with OFTY's programming.

"Our programs are in-demand," said Saira Frank, Managing Director of Opera for the Young, "and we want to ensure that they remain available for all students. A strong endowment means fiscal stability for many years to come... allowing the board and staff to focus on continuing to produce programs that are relevant and meaningful to today's students and classrooms and share the many joys of arts education through opera."

Opera for the Young Artistic Director Diane Garton Edie said, "Opera combines all the arts in vivid story-telling. It is such a potent vehicle for stimulating timely discussions and teaching values as well as entertaining. Preaching to the choir, kids tell us "Opera is cool!"

For more information and to receive updates on the 2020 campaign, please visit www.ofty.org/support-us/ways.



Credit: Happy Gnome Photography, 2018

Left: Bill Corey (Trevor Vanderzee) and Justice of the Peace in *The Elixir of Love*. Center: The Three-headed Ladies and Alien in *The Magic Flute*. Right: Jezibaba (Liana Gineitis) with Rusalka (Katherine Weber) and Prince (Brett Potts) in *Rusalka*.